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A SURVEY
OF THE
JAPANESE QUESTION
IN
CALIFORNIA

BY
J. SOYEDA AND T. KAMIYA

SAN FRANCISCO
1913

With the Compliments of the Authors

DR. JUICHI SOYEDA,

Honorary Member of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce

MR. TADAO KAMIYA,

Honorary Chief Secretary of the Tokyo Chamber of Commerce

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CHAPTER I.

General Survey.

Since Commodore Perry knocked at the door of Japan in 1852 and advised her to enter into international intercourse, she has been faithfully following in the footsteps of America. In return Japan has been favored with many acts of kindness by her neighbor on the other side of the Pacific.

Japan improved her educational, her banking and currency systems, and carried out many other changes in her institutions following the example of the great Republic. She also sent many of her young men to be educated in American universities.

The refunding of the Shimonoseki indemnity, the good-will shown at the time of the treaty revision, and the services rendered during the Portsmouth negotiations, have drawn Japan still closer to the United States of America, whose name has always been associated with justice, kindness and humanity.

Therefore, when the report of the Alien Land Law having been passed reached Japan, the spirit of which was discriminatory against the Japanese no matter what the pretensions in appearance may have been, the whole nation was at a loss to understand how things had taken such a turn. To say nothing of the great consternation created on the Pacific Coast among the Japanese, the people in Japan were much upset and could not help showing the deepest sympathy for their countrymen across the ocean. Political parties and Chambers of Commerce sent out men to express their sympathy to the sufferers, and to place the subject directly before the American people, hoping thus possibly to facilitate the negotiations between the two governments.

Looking a little further back, after the exclusion of the Chinese, there was a time when the Japanese were welcomed on the Pacific Coast; but since about 1900, and especially since that unhappy attempt at segregating the Japanese school children, the tide has turned. The bar placed before the Japanese coming from the Sandwich Islands, and the absolute prohibition, although initiated and voluntarily adopted by Japan, of fresh immigration of laborers from Japan by what is known

as the "gentleman's agreement" of 1907, were the most revolutionary results of the change.

In Japan, the nation took this "agreement" as unsatisfactory but unavoidable for the time being and has ever since looked for better days when not only her "face" would be saved but when her people would be admitted into this republic as equal fellow beings. And on the American side, too, the classes representing other than a certain element of the laboring men, such as fair-minded, conservative land owners and capitalists, greatly regretted this, partly for the reason that it was not fair or just and more especially for reasons of economic importance.

Meanwhile, gradual changes have been taking place in the status of the Japanese in America, some of them having bought a few lots of land with what they have saved, others who worked before on the railroads becoming tillers of the soil, and others who from their savings as house boys, etc., having started stores and shops of various kinds. Such changes, of course, were the reverse of conditions existing before, and were contrary to the narrow but prevailing sentiment concerning the subjection of the colored race in general.

Unseen, but none the less steadily, changes have been going on also with the American people. Politically, by abuse of democracy; economically, by the pre-eminence of labor; and socially, by the gradual change of the American element and sentiment, her public opinion and state policy occasionally deviating from what they used to be.

Between the years 1907 and 1910 on many occasions various bills discriminating against the Japanese have made their appearance in the Legislature of California. However, by the ultimate prevalence of moderation and fairness, especially by the prompt action of the Federal and State Governments, these have been kept from actually coming into force. Early in 1913, by the change in the United States Government, by the activity of the labor unions in California, and by other political influences, the Alien Land Law and a score of others of an Anti-Japanese nature were brought before the Legislature of the State of California. Affairs became so serious that the Secretary of State, Mr. Bryan, himself came over to Sacramento, and did his best to stem the tide. Unfortunately, his efforts did not bear fruit as hoped, and, although other bills did not go through, the Alien Land Law was passed and signed by Governor Johnson on the 19th of May.

The Japanese Government made protest in May, June and July, on the ground of the law being against the treaty and violating the sense of justice. After a great deal of delay and consideration a reply was handed to the Japanese Ambassador toward the end of July by the

United States Government, which, although kept in strict secrecy, it was reported to be a most comprehensive one and couched in courteous terms.

Laying great hope and trust in the justice and fairness of the United States Government, the Japanese in America, as well as at home, were keeping themselves in order and patience all this while. It would, therefore, be a rather difficult task for the Japanese Government to calm down popular resentment if they could not settle the matter satisfactorily, and it is reported that another note will be sent in reply to the last American communication.

CHAPTER II.

Contentions Brought Forward.

There are many reasons raised for the exclusion of the Japanese, but the chief ones may be summarized under the following four headings:

- 1—Political.
- 2—Economical.
- 3—Social.
- 4—Racial.

FIRST: The Political Contentions.

(a) The Democratic party coming into power, changes came in the way of dealing with the subject, because it had been laying great stress on individual state rights. The progressives in California turned a deaf ear to the words of the President, and Mr. Bryan's personal persuasion was of little avail except that the wording of the Alien Land Bill was made more diplomatic and the clause allowing three years lease was inserted at the request of the agricultural community of California. The bill being signed by the Governor, it fell to the United States government to decide, and it was placed in a very difficult position. Again it seems to have placed the final settlement on the shoulders of the court. It is much to be regretted that a question of such international importance should be made a subject of party politics, and not be settled before it became so serious.

(b) Labor unions in San Francisco were ever active in working against the Japanese, and so as not to lose their favor, politicians in California had to support the bill, with the exception of a few, such as the Senator from San Diego, who stood for justice and fought so bravely to the end. If the Japanese had had the power of voting things might have been different, so that their helpless situation is much to be pitied.

(c) Some believe that democracy must be a homogeneous body, so that the foreign element—such as the Japanese—must be excluded. But if we turn our eyes to the already existing heterogeneous condition of the American population, composed of negroes, Latins, Slavs, Jews, and what not, the argument falls to the ground. America is strong enough to assimilate different races; and the essential feature of a democracy being equality, it is against its nature to be exclusive or partial.

(d) It is much to be regretted that fears, quite unfounded, have been entertained—especially since the late war—in contrast to the sympathy shown Japan before and during her life and death struggle. To say that Japan is a warlike nation is absurd. What other nation enjoyed peace for so long a time as she? If she was forced to go into

war, it was solely for her self-preservation and for the Far Eastern peace. If she had not stood up or had not been successful in the late war, what would have been her own fate, as well as that of China? The history of the world would have been quite different. It is often said that the Japanese are too patriotic and loyal, but it is not a mere blind patriotism, being founded on the obedience to authority, law and the state. If the Japanese were admitted to take part in the American body politic they would make the best of citizens. It has been officially shown that the Japanese in California are the most law-abiding of all immigrants. Yet all sorts of criticisms are piled up on them and groundless fears are aroused because of the selfish purposes of mischief makers and of those who reap benefits, either directly or indirectly, through the creation of sensations and preparations for war.

SECOND: Of the economic contentions we have—

(a) As the population of the United States is now of considerable size, and as there are undesirable elements coming in from all quarters of the world, the time has come for her to place restriction on immigration. This contention has much weight when we consider that people of extreme socialistic ideas and anarchistic inclinations might some day be a cause of danger to the republic. But the restriction should be placed equally and fairly on all, without any discrimination of race or nationality. It is the unfair discrimination that is most resented by the Japanese nation.

(b) Natural resources must be preserved for posterity. Therefore, to let the Japanese buy up all the best land would be a disaster. It is true that resources must not be wasted, but the Japanese buying a few thousands out of hundreds of millions of acres and increasing the resources of the country, should not be discouraged, especially by such a big country as America, having such an extent of land lying idle.

(c) Some arguments, based on the superiority of the Japanese as to their hard work, their special skill in raising fruit and vegetables, their extra exertion in case of urgency, etc., seem to give rise to the fear that those who compete with them must surely fail. But this is an exaggeration of facts, for the lines along which the Japanese are making their success are quite different from those in which the Americans are working. They are not competing but doing something for the mutual benefit of both nationalities.

(d) Then comes the fear of absenteeism being encouraged if the land is entrusted to Japanese hands, the landlords all going eastward to New York or Europe to enjoy their time. This, also, is an exaggeration of actual facts, for even if the Japanese be excluded, so long as there are other people who would lease the land the same thing would

occur, if it ever does occur.

(e) Attacks, such as the Japanese being satisfied with lower wages or the land deteriorating if Japanese come into a district, are quite contrary to the actual state of things. Japanese get the same wages as Americans, if not higher. They are paying higher rent and are going in steadily for improvements on the land, and thus have increased the price of the land in many localities. Another statement that the Japanese use their own goods and send their money back home, is refuted by the very fact that they buy the land and make so many investments in America. Granting that they send back a part of their savings, the amount is insignificant compared with that sent home by immigrants of many European countries. In any case, the best fruits of the labor of immigrants remain permanent assets of America; what little they send back to Europe or Japan is, in a broad economic sense, an insignificant part thereof.

THIRD: The Social Contention.

(a) It is said that the standard of life of the Japanese is too low, and it has a lowering effect on that of the Americans. Beginning as wage earners on the lowest steps of the social ladder, the Japanese had to be frugal and live simply; but they, too, know well enough how to enjoy comforts and luxuries if they can afford them, and there are already many who live more luxuriously than some other immigrants.

(b) Then it is said that the status of the Japanese women is very low and that they are used for heavy work. Let it be here remembered that the Japanese woman's sphere lies in the home; while they do not take part in social activities, yet in their homes they hold as important positions as their American sisters. Moreover, changes are taking place in this respect and the Western ideas are fast getting a hold.

(c) The Japanese are said to be immoral, going in for gambling and other vices. This may be true in a few cases, but these evils are not the monopoly of the Japanese. Vigorous measures are being taken by the Japanese themselves to remedy all such social evils, and results have already shown themselves in many localities. No human being is free from faults and shortcomings, and if the Japanese are frankly told of their faults, they are most grateful and ready to rectify them.

(d) Then the Japanese, it is claimed, have no religion and are apt to break faith. To this it can be replied in the same way as above. Here it might be well to mention that there are a great many Christians among the Japanese population in America.

FOURTH: And the last, but not the least, comes the contention of race.

(a) The most common one is the non-assimilation theory, and the supporters of this theory declare that true assimilation cannot be effected except by intermarriage. But if thought and sentiment agree, different races can assimilate. Supposing intermarriage is absolutely necessary for assimilation; there are already many cases of intermarriage between the Japanese and the Americans; and there would be many more if it were not for the artificial and unjust restrictions placed by law and usage. In truth, the Japanese are the most assimilative, and their whole history is that of assimilation of different ideas and civilization. It is an admitted fact that Japan has gone far to assimilate the civilization of the East with that of the West, and her example is being followed by other nations in the Orient. If anybody entertains doubts on this point, it would be well for him to have just a look at the Japanese children born in the United States. They are Americans in every respect except color. Before passing judgment as to the assimilability of any race we must allow at least a generation.

(b) It is said "the United States has had too much of the racial question, especially in the solution of the negro problem. Moreover the negro has nothing behind him, unlike the Japanese who are backed by a strong government and nation". To this let it be repeated that the power of assimilation of the United States is strong enough to solve any race question; and surely the country that even fought for the negroes cannot deny the admission of the Japanese on mere racial grounds.

(c) Some say that the United States has already too many people from Europe, and that after the Panama Canal is opened in 1915, the country may be over-flooded with European immigrants. This may be true, but this cannot be given as a reason for placing restrictions upon and excluding the Japanese who are already in the States, unless it is proved that the Japanese are far more undesirable than other immigrants, which is unwarranted by actual facts. Is it a wise and patriotic policy to exclude the intelligent, orderly and loyal elements and welcome those who are ignorant, idle and anarchistic? It must also be remembered that unlimited natural resources and a boundless tract of land in the United States afford ample room for a great number of people, and it is better for her and for the general interest of humanity that her resources be opened and utilized.

(d) It is admitted that the Japanese are not inferior, but are different, and, it is deemed better to avoid intermingling, and if they

intermingle they must become thoroughly Americanized. To keep the different races apart is an impossibility in this day of rapid and easy communication. Of course, no exception can be raised to the placing of strict tests for admission, provided they are not discriminatory.

CHAPTER III.

The Solution.

FIRST: There must be a better understanding of the question by the United States. Even the people in California do not view the matter in a true and comprehensive manner, and therefore it is no wonder the people in the Middle West and Eastern States, being far away and less directly concerned, are still less informed, although they may entertain a better feeling toward the Japanese in general. It is natural that the general American public should believe more readily in what their own people say than what is told by foreigners, and here is the danger of mistaken ideas and distorted facts influencing the minds of the people in general.

Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that the Press and the public opinion of the West should be supplied with true and honest facts, so as to avoid misrepresentation being spread out to the other states. The people, being the leading power and each state having constitutional autonomy, the public opinion in general, and especially in California, must be well guided, in order to save the East from falling into errors and to facilitate the actions of the Federal government in matters of international relations. The easiest way to solve the question would be that of naturalization, although this suggestion had better come from the American side and with necessary safeguards. As regards other questions constitutionally entrusted to the Federal government, such as the due modification or perfection of treaties and conventions, there is no room for doubt that the United States government will do its utmost to settle the matter with honor and satisfaction to both countries.

SECOND: There are many things to be done by the Japanese government, and no doubt it has been doing its best to protect its people and to guard the national honor. If the repeated protests which were based on justice and fairness could pave the way to the revision or amendment of the treaty between the two countries or of the Federal and State laws, so as to remove all causes of doubt, if any, as to the entire equality of the rights of both peoples, it would surely give inexpressible satisfaction and boundless gratitude to the Japanese government and the people. The popular feeling in Japan being so strong and unanimous as regards the Californian question, the Japanese government would be placed in a very delicate and difficult position unless some way be found to relieve the situation.

Some even attack the Japanese government, saying that in the endeavor to carry out the Gentleman's Agreement in a faithful manner, it has been unduly strict, and believe that a relaxation of the

enforcement can be made without breaking faith with the United States government. It must be admitted that the sending out of families is most necessary for the formation of home life, and will help much to improve the condition of the Japanese in America as regards their daily living and mental sobriety. Then it may be advisable that the Japanese laws, such as the Alien Land Ownership Law, the Law of Domicile, etc., be amended on broader lines although no law in Japan is in any way discriminatory. At the same time it is necessary that more supervision and discretion be exercised over people going abroad; and to go still further to the foundation, the system of popular education itself should be improved, with the view that the people may be freed from difficulties and obstacles after they have gone abroad. Emigration of people to other places than the United States must also be investigated; and if by commercial and industrial progress more people could be kept at home, as was so successfully accomplished by Germany, an ideal state of things would be reached.

THIRD: The two governments of the United States and Japan we know, of course, are on the best terms of friendship and good will; but to leave this question unsolved and let it appear from time to time and supply material for the yellow press and petty politicians in both countries to play with, is a matter beset with great danger. For the lasting interest of both countries such a thing must be avoided by all means. If the two governments cannot come to an agreement it may be advisable to submit it to arbitration. At any rate it is absolutely necessary that the question be settled once and for all at the earliest possible moment.

FOURTH: There is much to be done by the Japanese themselves, both in America and at home. In the first place those who are already in the States must strive more and more for assimilation with the people and observance of the laws and customs of the land. They must work strenuously to remedy their faults, and do nothing to startle or irritate the people with whom they are living. Nothing must be done which would furnish material for attack, but any criticism, if well founded and reasonable, must be welcomed. In case they have any grievances or infringements of their rights concerning ownership of land, leases or naturalization, they are constitutionally justified in appealing to a judiciary. If they are at any time denied equal social treatment, without any tangible ground, they are entitled to seek redress; but if there be any justifiable ground they must rectify their conduct. Self help is, after all, the best help.

Whatever happens, the children born in the States must be carefully looked after, so that their future may be assured and they become

good citizens of the great Republic. We must not only think broadly, but look far into the distant future.

To return to the question at hand; a part of the unnecessary expenses incurred by the Japanese for clothes and food might far better be used for the betterment of their dwellings and sanitation. Their living in segregation or near the Chinese and frequenting Chinese gambling houses must be stopped, while more church-going and rest on Sundays should be encouraged. Noisy Buddhistic rituals, playing of Samisens, keeping of tea houses which arouse opposition and afford room for criticism, might better be avoided. Studying the language, customs and manners of the Americans, and closer intercourse, especially among the women and children, will go far towards bringing about a better understanding. A better use of savings could be made by means of credit associations, and opening public halls and libraries for the common benefit will do much toward mental and moral improvement. Every effort must be made to cast off the old undesirable customs and to adapt themselves to the new environment, so far as it is required by decency and courtesy.

Secondly, the people in Japan itself ought to go more thoroughly into the real aspect of things, not forgetting that a question of this kind requires a great deal of patience and careful consideration. To move a country which is really governed by the people, the movement must come from the people rather than the government and so long as the people of the two countries understand, respect and trust each other, there is no need of being pessimistic about the future.

FIFTH: We are told it is only a question of time and nothing very deep rooted. Other immigrants were disliked in the same way and even now some races are socially excluded. As time goes on, all will be well and it is better to wait and be patient. If we can believe this, and nothing intervenes, well and good. However, we must do whatever we can to hasten such a time by means of "Campaigns of Education" along permanent and broad lines with the aim to enlighten the public opinion not only in the two countries concerned but all the world over, paying special attention to the amelioration of the Japanese abroad.

CHAPTER IV.

Mission of America and Japan.

Although there is some talk of war among irresponsible persons in both countries, yet a question of this nature cannot be settled by fighting, as no trace of enmity must be left after the permanent and fundamental solution of such a question. Moreover, there are other points not to be overlooked, to say nothing of the American Japanese commerce which is already so large and will be sure to increase as time goes on. There are still higher and greater problems for the two countries. Peace on the Pacific, the bringing together of the East and the West, and the harmony between different races, such are the important questions that lie before them. Historically, constitutionally and geographically, the United States is in a position to take the lead in the noble work of guarding the peace of the world and of bringing together the different races, which if brought into conflict might lead to the greatest calamity that ever fell to the lot of man.

Japan will be glad to act in union with the United States, so long as the great Republic walks in the path of peace, justice and humanity; and as Japan's example is followed by other Oriental nations, while the two countries work together for the noble cause, the East and the West will be united and kept in harmony. If the United States goes in for warlike preparations, like the rest of the European nations have, the natural advantage of her position making her unassailable from the outside, is lost to her, and the tendency is that such preparations would some day be used for aggressive purposes. Other nations must be on the lookout for her and the world's peace would be in danger, and the people of all nations would have to groan more and more under heavy and destructive burdens, only to swell the pocket-books of the manufacturers of man-killing instruments. Is it not time then for the two countries to understand each other better, and to do away with suspicious and malicious misunderstandings, settling at once all small differences and working hand in hand for the higher and nobler missions that are left to their united efforts? It may also be well that the two countries enter into some union on a broader basis for the assurance of peace and the furtherance of civilization, thereby wiping out all local and temporary differences.

CHAPTER V.

Lessons Obtained.

FIRST: Japan, which was once petted like a child by the American people, is now unduly feared and even disliked by some as she grows up. But by the deeper study and better understanding of Japan, which was necessitated by the California question, the American public will know more of her neighbor, and it lies with America to judge who of all nations of the world is her best friend. The nation must be awakened to the serious consequences if the matter is not promptly and satisfactorily settled by the higher sense of fairness and a square deal. It is feared by some that Japan, pushing forward commercially, especially in China, might compete with the United States. This argument is unfounded, because there are vast fields and ample room for all in the Eastern markets, and in many cases Japan can be a co-operator and not a competitor of America. Moreover, commerce is not the only thing we must look to, for nations calling themselves civilized or advanced, must be guided by something still broader, higher and nobler.

SECOND: As to Japan herself, she must have found out that the problem of emigration of her people was too much disregarded until now. More care and attention must be paid to the general education and training of her people while at home, fitting them to lead successful and happy lives when they go abroad. In order to keep the gates opened for Japanese immigrants abroad, they must be well equipped physically and morally.

THIRD: It is a matter of congratulation that the Japanese in America are now thoroughly awakened to the need of their own improvement in all directions and it is to be commended that they have kept order perfectly, laying full trust in the two governments so far. Such acts as the repulsion of the Koreans at Hemmet might easily have called forth retaliation if it were not for the strong self-control exercised by the Japanese. However, there is a limit to patience and forbearance. The position of the Japanese on the Pacific Coast, therefore, is worthy of sympathy and praise. To sum up, if this unhappy event creates a better understanding of the Japanese among the people of the great Republic, and if by it the people in Japan and the States strive more for better living and thinking, good will come from evil and the wrong will be righted to the mutual benefit of the two countries and their people.

CHAPTER VI.

Future Forecast.

If, contrary to her traditional faithfulness to justice and humanity, contrary to the high and noble principles laid down by her illustrious forefathers, and, above all, contrary to the teaching of the Christian faith, the great Republic of the United States of America is going in for militant imperialism, and some of her statesmen are looking forward to worldly ambitions and territorial aggrandizement, and are even ready to kindle the fire of race hatred and world-wide consternation, then what would be the disappointment of her trusting friend on the other side of the Pacific, and with it that of the teeming populations of the Orient?

Such a change in her national policy may perhaps give satisfaction to some powers who want to reap benefits while others are quarreling; but what would it mean to the peace of the world, to the harmony among the races, and to the welfare of mankind? Perchance, if such be the goal and aspiration of the United States of America, Japan and other nations of the world will have to change, fundamentally, their ideas about her. However, let us pray that there be no occasion for such a fear, and may all nations be encouraged to walk forever in the path of peace and civilization, by the ultimate triumph of the true American spirit and by the universal prevalence of justice and humanity.

San Francisco, August 6, 1913.

